

# ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

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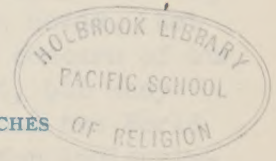
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the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES  
the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS  
the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION  
the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION  
the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



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November 26, 1948

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## GREAT BRITAIN

## Church of England Endorses Amsterdam Assembly

The Church Assembly of the Church of England has received a report of its delegates to the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The conclusion of the report is as follows:

"The foundation of the World Council of Churches in this moment of world history is a significant fact, for it recalls what God has done and is doing, and it stands for a unity transcending differences of East and West. Its future is in the hand of God. It is still young, and its development depends to a great extent on the attitude of the member Churches towards it, and on what may be called the awakening of the ecumenical consciousness among all Christian people. The delegation of the Church of England believes that the Anglican Communion has a special part to play in the ecumenical movement. It hopes, therefore, that the Church Assembly will give the World Council its active and continuing support, and that the ecumenical movement will spread throughout the parishes, in the schools and universities, and in work among youth, and in the relations between members of the Church of England and members of other Christian Churches in their local areas".

The Church Assembly adopted unanimously the following resolution on the motion of the Bishop of London:

"That the Assembly, having considered the Report of the Delegation from the Church of England to the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam, cordially welcomes the inauguration of the World Council."

E.P.S. Geneva

## UNITED STATES

## United Lutheran Church and Amsterdam Assembly

The delegates of the United Lutheran Church to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches have submitted a full report to the Biennial Convention of the United Lutheran Church held in October in Philadelphia. We quote the following paragraph from this report:







"The character and mood of the Amsterdam Assembly were strongly assuring to Lutherans. Its wholesome evangelical attitude has already been noted. Not only was this clearly manifested and the several special areas of concern of our Church satisfactorily covered, as will appear later in this report, but many vaguer misgivings were allayed, too. It is plainly evident now that the World Council of Churches does not conceive of itself as an instrument for indiscriminate church unionism. Confessional convictions were treated with wholesome respect at Amsterdam. If some of us approached the first Assembly with suspended judgment at this vital point, that attitude is not justified now. The loose use of such phrases as 'The World Church' or 'Una Sancta', as applied to the new fellowship in even a marginal way, diminished perceptibly during the sessions and did not intrude into official documents. The World Council has distinctly recognised that it is a 'council' of Churches. This is its right function and role and the Amsterdam Assembly definitely accepted it." E.P.S.Geneva

## CHINA

### Can Missions Continue in Communist China?

"The Christian Century" of October 27, 1948 contains an article by Robert Root who, after spending some months in China, came home to the United States and gave his impressions on China.

"What is the prospect for Christianity in Communist-dominated China?" asks Mr. Root. "The general assumption among Christians is that the survival of Christianity will be jeopardized and that mission work will be impossible..."

"There is more mission work in Communist China than one might think. Hospitals which are useful to any army at war, get more sympathetic treatment than other institutions. Roman Catholics of all nationalities, and Americans, get the shortest shrift. Danish and British missionaries are at work in Manchuria. A recent visitor reports that the London Missionary Society has a school open in Red territory near Tientsin. A Lutheran nurse has held on in Honan after her colleagues evacuated, and a Presbyterian woman has stayed in Shantung. Others... have retreated, less before actual persecution than before the immense difficulties of working under arbitrary rulings. (see also EPS Nos. 43 and 17).

"Missions of the United Church of Canada and the Church of the Brethren, which were in northern areas now 'liberated' have been wiped out and the missionaries have taken work with other Churches. A large group of Lutherans from America have been evacuated from Honan, and they are joining other Lutheran missions or starting new stations in Kuomintang areas. American Presbyterians have a city foothold in Shantung but have found their major work in Communist-held rural areas there impossible. English Baptists, American Southern Baptists, Southern Presbyterians, Congregationalists, both American and British Methodists and the Church of England have been adversely affected."

Mr. Root has an interview with "one of Hongkong's shrewdest Communists", Miss Kung Pen, who is "a mission school product", graduated from an Episcopal high school and Yenching University. "In fact, it was Christian welfare work that first opened her middle-class eyes to the needs of China's masses and started her leftward swing. Miss Kung assured me... that so long as they don't mix in politics, missionaries are free to do what they want. Unlike Russia, she





added, the Nanking regime has not considered religion important... A number of Christians in China are interested in Communism and are trying to fit the two together...

"There is, at least, prospect of enough freedom in the China of the 1950's to justify planning a mission programme. But there will have to be a new approach. There will be no place for elaborately housed institutions... Christian work will have to be an organisationless type of Church, if there is such a thing. Hospitals might continue, for they make a contribution that Communists can understand. Schools would probably have to go as Christian schools. Yet there is hope for a simple, pioneering type of mission effort. The primitive 'rough-it' work of the first century disciples comes to mind.

"The kind of job would require unique missionaries. They would have to renounce comfort as did the missionaries who first opened new lands a century and more ago. They would have to have the courage to face sudden death at the hands of foreign-haters who might not understand the party line on religion, and also the courage to tackle, or evade, their own government's reluctance to have citizens in danger areas. They would need qualities of mind which allowed them to sympathise with Communist anger at exploitation but enabled them to resist the temptation to exploit hatreds and ignore personality as means justified to gain utopian ends.

"But for the devoted there would be compensations. Talk about 'building bridges of understanding'! The iron curtain cuts off Russia and central Europe, but it has not yet been demonstrated that there is an Oriental iron curtain. Perhaps China is the one place on the globe where an imaginative Church, with great experience of the land, could be a leaven able to penetrate the brittle hardtack of Communism."

E.P.S.Geneva

#### CHINA

#### Missionaries not to Leave

In spite of recommendations by American consulates, it is unlikely, according to mission headquarters in Shanghai, that there will be a general evacuation of American mission staffs from Communist-threatened areas of China. The decision has been left to individuals themselves, and it appears that there is a general desire to continue working.

E.P.S.Geneva

#### INDIA

#### The National Missionary Society of India

In its report for the year ending September 30, 1948, the National Missionary Society of India stated that "faced with new opportunities consequent on the new set-up in the country and with new problems peculiar to an indigenous, inter-denominational and All India Organisation placed on independent India, there has appeared in our work and planning a new note of expectation of great things from God."

One of the main tasks was the detailed investigation of the scheme of Rural Evangelism, as also the possibilities of developing the Society's work along lines designed to meet the needs of the educated Hindu.

which, the London Convention was a very important step in the history of the United Nations. It was the first time that the United Nations had been able to bring about a general agreement on the subject of disarmament.

There is, of course, a great deal of work to be done in the future. The United Nations must continue to work for the achievement of its aims. It must continue to bring about a general agreement on the subject of disarmament. It must continue to work for the achievement of its aims. It must continue to bring about a general agreement on the subject of disarmament.

The kind of job which the United Nations must do is a very difficult one. It is a job which requires the cooperation of all the member states. It is a job which requires the cooperation of all the member states. It is a job which requires the cooperation of all the member states.

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The greatest event of the year was the meeting of the All India Council last December, and one of the subjects that engaged the earnest consideration of the Council was the relation of missions, particularly of the National Missionary Society, to the Churches in India. "They felt that the time had come for the work of Missions and Churches to be completely integrated. They urged that the N.M.S. be regarded by all the Churches as the missionary expression of the Indian Church as a whole. The Society has the responsibility of stimulating missionary zeal in the Churches and welcomes every possible opportunity to present its message to the congregations and to build up a system of cooperation by which even the missionary work of the Indian Church in foreign fields may be undertaken in cooperation with the Society". Thus "we have moved from evangelistic planning to effective action".

An other important event for the N.M.S. was the coming into being of the Church of South India. "The three great communions which have thus become united as one Church have been helping the Society from its earliest beginnings and we are grateful to the authorities of this Church for their recognition and offer of support".

As to the N.M.S. and the National Christian Council both these organisations have always helped each other in the work of evangelism, but at the All India Council a fresh step was taken, in that the N.M.S. has become a member of the National Christian Council and has thus come to be directly represented on the Council.

The Society has continued to work in close cooperation with the various other organisations such as the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., Student Christian Movement, etc.

E.P.S.Geneva

#### SWEDEN

#### New Bishop of Lund

Dr Anders Nygren, President of the Lutheran World Federation, has been elected bishop of the diocese of Lund of the Lutheran Church of Sweden. He succeeds Bishop Edward Rodhe, who is retiring. This election has been confirmed by the Swedish Government. Bishop Nygren is to assume office on January 1, 1949.

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#### FINLAND

#### Church Remarriage of Divorced Persons

In Finland, where the Church is a State Church, the marriage ceremony can be performed either in church or before civil authorities. The General Church Assembly - the majority of which is composed of lay members - has now decided that "a divorced person, whose former husband or wife is still living, does not have the right to an ecclesiastical marriage nor can his or her civil marriage be ecclesiastically blessed, unless the pastor considers there to exist exceedingly important reasons for justifying it".

This decision, which is to be approved by the Finnish Parliament, has caused much discussion in the Finnish Press. The Government paper "Suomen Sosialidemokraatti" declared in a leading article that the Church has tried to place itself above the law. This paper is now advocating, as do certain Communist organs, that civil marriage should be made compulsory to all those wishing to marry at all. The Extreme Left further wishes to separate Church and State.





Attacks on the Church over this decision, however, are not confined to any one party. Many papers are now prophesying extensive defections from the Church.

The Minister of Education, Mr. Oittinen, writes in an article that although the question is a complicated one he does not consider that the Church Assembly's attitude is the right one. What is more to the point is, he considers, that too hasty marriages should be prevented. "The refusal of church remarriage is a harsh punishment and more in harmony with the secular than with the ecclesiastical conception of justice. Nevertheless, the Church, like every other association of free citizens, has the right to act as it sees fit where its own members are concerned," though it has no reason to assume that the non-church political Right will necessarily support its decision any more than the Left. "It is, however, obvious that one could now think of making civil marriage compulsory."

E.P.S.Geneva

#### GREECE

#### New Testaments for the Army

150,000 New Testaments in Modern Greek have just been brought out in the United States. They are to go to Greece in response to a request made last Autumn to the American Bible Society by the Greek military authorities. The British and Foreign Bible Society in Canada is printing 50,000 New Testaments in Ancient Greek for the same destination. To date more than 200,000 Gospels printed in New York have been sent to the commander of the Greek forces.

E.P.S.Geneva

#### YUGOSLAVIA

#### Patriarch Gavrilu Congratulates Ecumenical Patriarch Elected

Patriarch Gavrilu of the Serbian Orthodox Church has sent congratulations to the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul on the election of Archbishop Athenagoras of New York as Ecumenical Patriarch (see E.P.S. No. 44).

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#### GERMANY

#### Catholics and Protestants Share Church

#### Buildings

The "Evangelische Nachrichtendienst Ost" (Evangelical News Service East), published by the Society for Evangelical Literature, working with the Chancellery of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), reports in its issue of November 6:

"The Evangelical Consistorium of Berlin-Brandenburg has broadcast directions regarding the availability of Evangelical churches for ministrations by the Roman Catholic Church. It is emphasised that both Churches are eager to put accommodation at disposal for Divine service of the other confession, and thus to be of assistance to one another. This willingness to meet other Churches half-way should not, however, lead to any destruction of discipline within one's own Church. Thus, should a member of the Evangelical community reject the Evangelical form of marriage and confess his preference for the Catholic sacrament, the Evangelical Church and its buildings should not be made available for the requisite ceremonies. Likewise, a promise by an Evangelical to have his children baptised and educated in the Catholic faith is taken as a neglect of





the Protestant understanding of the Gospel and of his confirmation vow. The use of the church for his marriage by a Catholic priest should be forbidden to such a person. Parish councils are, however, urged to cooperate in every possible way concerning ministrations by Catholic priests to members of the Roman Catholic Church."

E.P.S.Geneva

#### GERMANY

#### Bishop Wurm's Decision to Retire

Bishop Wurm, of Stuttgart, has decided, in view of his age, to lay down his dual office as Bishop of the Province of Württemberg and as President of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). Bishop Wurm does not intend, however, to go into retirement until the work of union decided on at the Church Assembly of Eisenach is finally concluded. That will not be possible until the pan-German Synod elected according to the new constitution and returned by all the Land Churches has met in Bethel, and the legal basis for the election of the new President of the Evangelical Church Council is thus in existence. Bishop Wurm will, however, have been replaced as Bishop of Württemberg by the time of the Bethel Synod.

E.P.S.Geneva

#### Development of Refugee Work

The Refugee Division of the Reconstruction Department of the World Council of Churches is endeavouring to develop close contacts with the receiving countries, and some contacts have already been established. In connection with the Refugee Division, Dr Barnabas Dienes of the Evangelical and Reformed Church of the United States has been sent to South America to undertake negotiations with Church and Government authorities concerning reception of immigrants and ministry to them. In addition, Dr A. Stanley Trickett, who after a period of work in Geneva is returning to the States, will, in the course of a journey to South America discuss on behalf of the Refugee Division the question of establishing church reception committees for the refugees. A special success was the journey of Dr Samuel Rizzo to Brazil in connection with the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Dr Rizzo succeeded in a few weeks' time in securing the resettlement of 1100 Protestant and Orthodox refugees.

Simultaneously with these efforts made overseas, the Geneva Refugee Division is extending its staff of European field workers. The Baptist World Alliance is sending the Rev. Frederick Schatz from Birmingham, Ala., to minister to the refugees of the Baptist Church, working in close cooperation with the Refugee Division.

On November 21st the dedication of the offices to the representatives of the Refugee Division in the British Zone took place at Bad Salsufflen in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The alterations in the organisation of the Refugee Division necessitated by the Conference of Amsterdam are just being completed. The important annual Conference of the World Council of Churches on refugee work, which brings together the largest possible circle of responsible churchmen within the refugee work, is also to be summoned in the near future.

E.P.S.Geneva





ROUMANIAThe Oath of the Heads of Religions

In addition to the news-item concerning the religious question in Roumania published in E.P.S. No. 46, Article 21 of the Decree No. 177 reads as follows:

"The Heads of religions and all metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, superintendents, apostolic administrators, administrative vicars, and others with like functions, elected or appointed in accordance with the charters of the respective religions, shall be able to function only after approval by the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly, given by decree, at the proposal of the Government, following the recommendation of the Minister of Religion.

"Before taking up their duties, they shall be sworn in by the Minister of Religion. The wording of the oath is as follows:

"As a servant of God, as a man and a citizen, I swear to be true to the People and to defend the Roumanian People's Republic against its enemies abroad and at home. I swear to respect the laws of the Roumanian People's Republic and to ensure that my subordinates also respect them. I swear that I shall not allow my subordinates to undertake or to take part, and that I myself shall not undertake or take part in any action likely to affect public order and the integrity of the Roumanian People's Republic. So help me God."

"This form of oath is compulsory also for the leaders of civilian associations of a religious character. The other members of the clergy belonging to the various religions, as well as the presidents or leaders of local communities shall, before taking up their duties, be sworn in by their hierarchic chiefs with the following oath:

"As a servant of God, as a man and as a citizen, I swear to be true to the people and to defend the Roumanian People's Republic against its enemies abroad or at home; I swear to respect the laws of the Roumanian People's Republic, and I pledge myself to secrecy with regard to all matters connected with the service of the State. So help me God." E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANYThe Evangelical Churches and the Projected Bonn Constitution

The Evangelical Churches of the British Zone have defined their attitude to the articles of the State Constitution deliberated in Bonn, so far as these have at present been made public. They begin by observing that Article VII of this plan, which deals with the relation of the State to religious communities, is incomplete and requires supplementing. As it stands, it first of all guarantees freedom of faith, conscience and worship, but beyond this merely confines itself to the statement that "no-one shall be obliged to take part in ecclesiastical functions, or to declare his religious convictions."

The governing bodies of the Churches recommend the introduction of certain modifications into the basic law of the Constitution by which the right of the Church to independence of the State would be taken into account, but by which due weight would be given also to its public service in the national





community. They therefore propose that the following sentence should be added to Article VII of the projected constitution: "The importance of the Christian Churches and religious communities to the life of the nation is recognised. No State Church shall be formed". In addition, statements regarding the right of the Church to an independent administration of its own are put forward for inclusion.

The attitude of the Churches concerning education is at present under discussion. The Churches regard it as vitally necessary that it be made a general regulation covering the whole area of Germany that "religious instruction shall be a regular subject in all schools", as up till now very widely varying regulations have been in force in individual provinces. Should the question of such education also come under the basic law of the Constitution, the Church will submit special proposals. E.P.S.Geneva

### U.S.S.R.

### The Work of the Religious Institutes

The Parish weekly "Les Nouvelles Russes" (November 19, 1948) publishes the following interview with A.W. Wedrnikov, a lecturer at the Orthodox Academy in Moscow.

The present religious institutes in Moscow - a preparatory school for priests, the Seminary and the Academy - have grown out of the shortened pastoral course of two years started in 1944, and of the theological institute begun at the same time, where the syllabus covered three years. The syllabus of the pastoral course was intended to meet the minimum needs of the ministry, while the institute had to cram the normal four to five years' training of the higher clergy into the fixed period.

Candidates were accepted in those days without any entrance examination, nor was any age-limit fixed. Very different kinds of people registered their names, sometimes without any religious equipment, and urged by the sole wish to serve God. So the requirements had temporarily to be reduced. However, already in the second year it became evident that an entrance examination was needed. In addition, the experiences had shown that the syllabus required alteration. The pastoral course was replaced by a one-year period at a preparatory school, while on the other hand the syllabus at the institute was extended to cover four years instead of three. The training of middle-grade priests consisted of study at the preparatory school and during the first year of the institute's course. Seminary training included the completion of the second year at the institute. Completion of the Academy course was equivalent to four years at the institute. Preparatory school, Seminary and Academy together form one whole divided into three stages.

There are 160 candidates in the Seminary and 24 in the Academy. Their backgrounds differ considerably in many cases. A small number of them are sons of priests. Many are highly cultured, and 25 of them were decorated fighting for their country; 6 have already been ordained. Their ages vary from 18 to 45, and one student has passed 60. Up to now 36 students have passed their final examinations in the Seminary. The Academy cannot yet point to any who have completed their courses; this will not come until next year. There are in all 18 lecturers at the three establishments, all of whom were trained at the old Religious High Schools of Russia. E.P.S.Geneva

